



Blocking Out The World NoiseBuster Headphone Product Review

By Paul Pence



Noise cancellation is an interesting scientific achievement. We have all seen waves on the water meet other waves, and their combined force causes them to splash unusually high. It splashes high where the two wave crests meet. It has an unusually low dip where the wave troughs meet. And, oddly, the place where a wave meets a trough, there's no wave at all. If you have both waves coming from the same direction and at the same speed, but set up so that every wave crest meets with the other wave's trough, you'll have no wave at all.

Confused? Okay, so you're not a physicist, there's no shame in that. Luckily, there are physicists working at Protech Communications who know how to use that wave canceling principle to make ultra-quiet headphones.

They recently sent me one of their NoiseBuster headphones to test out and tell you about.

The Noisebuster's earcups cover most of the ear, but not all, so they are not as hot as full-ear headphones. They were still a little warm, and they pressed the tops of my ears against my glasses, but not uncomfortably so. When the first active noise suppression headphones were introduced, they were monsters that sacrificed physical comfort for noise reduction, but these were a good balance.



According to the literature, they reduce noise by 18 decibels. That will reduce busy street noise down to the level of an average office. Or take your quiet living room with the hum of the air conditioner and wind on the windows and turn it into something quieter than a recording studio.

Of course, it only reduces the noise inside your ears -- science has only progressed so far, so don't hold your breath while waiting for a universal solution to noise.

And while it's producing anti-noise waves to cancel out the noise, it's also producing music or game sound effects or a movie soundtrack.

Now here's the point that I admit the limits of my abilities. I can hear the difference between my TV set sound and my stereo sound, but I can't hear enough difference between my \$100 stereo and my buddy's \$3000 sound system to justify spending \$3000. Sure, there's a difference -- and surround sound is neat, but it's hard for me to place a dollar value on perfect sound reproduction.

But I can place a value on reducing noise, especially on an airplane. Depending on the plane and where you sit, the noise in an airplane cabin can be tremendous. I found long ago that my tendency toward airsickness was reduced by wearing headphones. Until now, I had settled for swamping out the drone of the engines with sound from the airline's cheap headphone. Now I have the option of canceling out the noise and listening to music at a more reasonable level. My audiophile buddy swears that lower noise levels means lower volume settings and therefore better sound quality. I just know that I can hear my music or the in-flight movie without blasting my eardrums.

There are a few nice touches that deserve mentioning. One is an adaptor for the plug so that it fits the double-prong airline sockets. Another is that the headphones fold and tuck away in a small pouch -- while not as convenient as a set of ear buds, I don't have to worry about them in my carry-on luggage. And, oddly, is the thoughtfulness that the engineers had in placing the glowing red LED showing that the headphones are active on the backside of the headphones.



They're not power-hogs, as I had feared. A single AAA battery was sufficient to run them for hours and hours. And they even came with the battery.

A quick search on Amazon showed some competitor's headphones to be as expensive as \$160, and others as low as \$30. NoiseBuster's headphones at \$69 is among the less expensive options for active noise reduction -- something that I'm willing to pay for.

It's designed with travelers in mind; so if you travel and don't like noise, consider getting a pair. I recommend these headphones for people who want to listen to music in a quiet place, but their most quiet place isn't nearly quiet enough. And even if you're not a physicist and the concepts of "mirror image wave forms" and "destructive interference" sounds more like noise than science, you can still reduce noise with just a flip of a switch.

Specifications

- Frequency range: 20 - 20,000 Hz
- Noise cancellation range: 40 - 1,200 Hz, maximum 18dB at 100-200 Hz
- Impedance: 15 Ohm/active - 36 Ohm/passive
- Maximum power input: 60mW
- Audio plug: 3.5mm stereo plug
- Power: 1-AAA battery (included)

NoiseBuster is available from Amazon, from Pro Tech online at www.protechcommunications.com, or by calling 800-468-8371.



About the author, Paul Pence:

Not a life-long Rhode Islander, Paul got to Rhode Island as fast as he could. He has 25 years of writing experience and numerous publication credits including the Providence Journal, the East Greenwich Magazine, Weissmann Travel Reports, Travel Lady Magazine, Jackhammer, Your Skin and Sun, TravelNotes, TexWoman, and many others.